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To: House Education Committee
Subject: Written testimony re: H7415, HJR 8131 & H7615

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To the Education Committee of the Rhode Island State Legislature,

I am writing today in support of two bills: H7415 and HJR 8131. Additionally, this letter serves in opposition to H7615.

This committee should vote to place a moratorium on the approval of all new charter schools, develop a nonpartisan funding commission to properly evaluate the support for new school models in the future and reject that school districts in this state can replace their existing school system with an independent charter school model.

As a parent of a Providence Public School student, I have seen first hand how despite an ineffective State takeover, efforts to privatize public schools, and underinvestment in student-centered learning initiatives, my child continues to thrive. Teachers and support staff do what they can to deliver a rich curriculum and bilingual education. PPSD's Leviton Dual Language School is an exemplary model of what a public school can achieve with the right vision and support.

Yet many elected leaders along with leadership at RIDE continue to suggest that saturating our school system with more Charter Schools has the potential to improve education outcomes through increased competition and the piloting of innovative education models. But this is bad for students, bad for educators, bad for parents, and a poor financial bet for the State.

Charters attempt to integrate an independent education offering claiming it will improve outcomes through healthy competition. However, public resources exist because they are fundamentally ill suited to open market systems of competition. Public institutions should be collaborative, not competitive, seeking to execute on the best possible pedagogy for students. Giving licenses for private models backed by dark-money lobbying groups is not the answer. In fact, it is incredibly risky for the State. What happens if a charter school shuts down suddenly and ceases operation? What happens to the hundreds of students who now have no school? Charters have no mandate to continue operations.

Furthermore, testing data from charter schools shows virtually no distinction from public school testing outcomes. Once one adjusts for the fact that most charters do not have resources for students with IEPs or that they have pushed out students with learning challenges, overall test scores are actually lower in many charters than in their public counterparts.

Charter schools also claim to develop innovative education practices, but this does not hold true in execution. Few charter schools execute on a truly unique approach or education model. Additionally, there is little to no evidence that actionable data is being collected by districts to learn from and implement best practices. Legislation claims that there is some level of accountability, but there is little

to no evidence that charter schools are accountable to their curriculum, practices, standards, and students. If the State wants to support innovative models, then they should pass legislation to give districts more freedom to develop unique curriculum with less focus on standardized testing.

Instead of developing new models for learning, most charters are diluting existing resources while the State's student-age population is actually shrinking. We already have a teacher labor shortage. We do not need to exasperate it by adding more schools that target underqualified and uncertified teachers.

In conclusion, I urge this committee to approve H7414 and HJR 8131 while rejecting H 7615. Let's pause on the expansion of charters and focus our educational efforts strengthening the public school system not by weakening it.

Thank you for your service.

Sincerely,
Avishai Mallinger

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